

# Five Components of Reading

## ***Phonics***

### **Description**

Phonics is the understanding that there is a predictable relationship between phonemes (the sounds of spoken language) and graphemes (the letters and spelling that represent those sounds in written language). Phonics instruction teaches children the relationship between the letters (graphemes) of written language and the individual sounds (phonemes) of the spoken language. Phonics instruction helps children learn and use the alphabetic principle—the understanding that there are systematic and predictable relationships between written letters and spoken sounds (*Put Reading First*, p. 12).

### **How Phonics Supports a Comprehensive Reading Program**

- Phonics instruction is not an entire reading program for beginning readers. It is only one of five basic components studied by the National Reading Panel Report for the improvement of reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (National Reading Panel, pp. 2–136).
- Systematic phonics instruction should be integrated with other reading instruction (National Reading Panel, pp. 2–136).
- Along with phonics instruction, children should be solidifying their knowledge of the alphabet, engaging in phonemic awareness activities, and listening to stories and informational texts read aloud to them. They should also be reading texts and writing letters, words, and stories (*Put Reading First*, p. 15).
- Phonics and phonics instruction are a means to the real end: comprehension of written language (*Put Reading First*, p. 15).
- Phonics instruction should aim to teach the important letter–sound relationships, which, once learned, are practiced through having many opportunities to read (Stahl, 2002).
- Knowledge of the alphabetic principle contributes greatly to children’s ability to read words both in isolation and in connected text (*Put Reading First*, p. 12).
- Approximately two years of phonics instruction is sufficient for most students. If phonics instruction begins in kindergarten, it should be completed by the end of first grade (*Put Reading First*, p. 18).

### **Scientifically Based Reading Research Related to Phonics**

- The goal of phonics and phonics instruction is to help children to use the alphabetic principle: the systematic and predictable relationships between written letters and spoken sounds. Knowing these relationships will help children recognize familiar words accurately and automatically, and “decode” new words (*Put Reading First*, p. 12).
- Phonics instruction taught early is more effective than phonics instruction



introduced after first grade (National Reading Panel, pp. 2–133).

- Systematic phonics instruction is beneficial for students of any socioeconomic status (National Reading Panel, pp. 2–133).
- Phonics is taught effectively in whole class, small group, and tutoring settings (National Reading Panel, pp. 2–133).
- Systematic phonics instruction makes a bigger contribution to children’s growth in reading than nonsystematic alternative programs or no phonics (National Reading Panel, pp. 2–133).
- Students who can read words accurately and quickly are on their way to becoming fluent, successful readers (Teacher Reading Academies, 2002).
- Research has determined that successful readers rely primarily on the letter–sound correspondences and spelling patterns in words, rather than on context or pictures to identify familiar and unfamiliar words (Teacher Reading Academies, 2002).
- Readers should enjoy and appreciate reading literature and non-fiction, comprehend and learn from text, and recognize words automatically. If children do not recognize words automatically, they cannot comprehend text effectively (Stahl, 2002).

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